

Derith Smith, Clerk

Attn: Sue Palmer, President

Village of Empire

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I am writing this letter in response to a recommendation for a proposed ordinance concerning short term rentals in Empire. As an owner of a STR property in Empire, I appreciate the amount of effort expended by the STR committee on their research and analysis. I think it makes sense to be aware of the trends put forth in the report, but in my opinion, the facts do not warrant the establishment of short term rental restrictions at this time for the following reasons.

- 1) Until Empire is able to establish viable full-time employment in addition to Cherry Republic, Empire's most valuable economic resource is its beach and surrounding natural beauty thereby attracting vacationing people from outside Empire.  
In my opinion older long-time residents tend not to maintain their homes as well as STR owners, either due to their age or financial constraints. (As a side note, Empire might consider the development of an area of modest, affordable, low profile, well-built townhomes to accommodate those people over 55.) The natural cycle of generations attracts a younger generation which helps maintain the life blood of the community. The natural beauty and desire of many families to experience the simplicity of an earlier time-period has been an attraction which has been sought by many vacationing short term renters.
- 2) STR owners have an income stream which allows them funds to maintain and improve their property.
- 3) Empire will continue to attract incoming buyers who drive prices of existing real estate higher. How many new buyers of existing real estate become full time residents?
- 4) Potential income from fees derived from STR licensing would not generate very much income and would tend to create one more department of local government requiring administration. It seems to me that to maintain and improve Empire's full-time residency, the focus needs to be more full-time employment rather than restrictions on STR.
- 5) Several years ago on one occasion there was a complaint expressed to me as an owner concerning excessive noise or disturbing of the peace by my step son and my adult grandchildren. I made it clear to them that my property is a STR and out of respect for others as well as maintaining a good reputation, they were to behave and have consideration for others. That was enough to ultimately solve the problem. If enforcement is required, that may require a sheriff's presence. Many people who rent in Empire return year after year and would not do anything to jeopardize their opportunity to return to my STR.

I realize STR is not a stand alone issue, but is an integral part of the village planning.  
Thank you for your consideration. Randy Parks 10358 Niagara St.

Additional comments submitted to the 2017 Masterplan Committee of Empire, MI

Develop year round educational and seminar venues that attract corporate clients, individuals who are interested in survival courses, hydroponic and aquaponic food production, alternative energy – wind and solar, orchard and farm experience, winemaking, internet technology and security, accredited courses. Set up so that educational courses could be a tax deduction. This would require coordination with homeowners who rent out their houses as well as increased accommodations. This would double as a vacation, learning experience for the whole family. The area has so much to offer in the way of recreation. Year round destination venues are needed first, then other business opportunities will then thrive.

On a different level Camp Leelanau LOC Program (Leelanau Outdoor Center) begins to approach what I am talking about,

Coordinating with zoning and planning to prevent overbuilding or excessive development would be required. I would recommend no franchise business to be allowed within the village boundaries and no structure higher than 3 floors. Development would require a comprehensive village sewer system to be phased in which in turn would attract additional development.

Empire attracts people who appreciate its natural, physical setting without the commercialism of big expensive development like the Homestead. The natural beauty of the beach, South Bar Lake, Park area including Ben Weiss property if possible, should be preserved as natural as possible. Front Street development including Jim Bagaloff's property can be done in an architecturally pleasing design compatible with Empire's simple charm. I live in a small historic village just outside of Cincinnati Ohio where the village requires approval of appropriate design and architecture.

As development occurs, parking and traffic flow will become more critical.

Thank you for your efforts. Once decisions are made and plans to move forward are established, there is no turning back.

I realize that I have stated some of the obvious.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Parks

10358 Niagara St.